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ABSTRACT

Virtue in journalism implies a clearsighted expansion of outlook and requires determined attempts to cross boundaries separating the journalist from society, journalist from subject, journalist from journalist, journalist from ideas, journalist from sentiments and feelings, and journalist from "inner abundance." Some of the requirements for the development of an imaginative and effective journalistic outlook include (1) an integrity fortified by authentic respect for the audience; (2) a true sense of identity as journalist; (3) collaboration; (4) sympathy, attention, and imagination; and (5) wandering, adventure, and surprise. Much, if not most, journalism is frivolous, and it can be seen as a sort of "fussing." If journalism is regarded as frivolity, then its projection, the readership, the viewership, the audience, will also be frivolous. This is where integrity comes in. Integrity, whether regarded as organizational or individual, separates journalism from the projection of its most convenient and profitable purposes. Virtuous journalism, drawing strength from integrity, relies on idealism based on social necessity and true professional responsibility. Journalists, who stand out not only because of their skill and proficiency but also for their feeling and moral outlook, ought to be at the core of the tradition taught in journalism, rather than being viewed as exceptional or marginal figures. (HOD)

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THE VIRTUOUS JOURNALIST

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There are necessary voices and some belong to journalists. When they are interrupted or stilled, we suffer loss, and suffer more if with passing time events which require special definition seem to go unobserved. This quality of voice, a moral quality, embodying as its essence attention, was evident in the journalism of Albert Camus, George Orwell, Heywood Broun, and, less consistently, in the reporting of Edward R. Murrow and Eric Severeid. Their characteristic gravity of tone need not imply that gravity is required, or words: Don Marquis's Archy and Mehitabel were attentive; the photographs of Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange and W. Eugene Smith have this quality; so do the unnarrated documentaries of Frederick Wiseman.

These are journalists who contribute to our education and fortify our convictions. They participate, as John Grierson said of the documentary filmmakers he inspired, to the "articulation of our time." They reveal to us something which seems truthful, and quite often the act of revealing requires that, among other intervening deceptions, they must sweep aside a clutter of inferior and obscuring journalism, and resist the journalistic stereotyping which compounds falsification. They must practice a counter-journalism, detect and avoid the processes through which the assumption of chaos (Iranians acting incomprehensibly) is reduced to the presumption of understanding (the incomprehensibility of Iranians certified by western reporters). The reporting and interpreting offered by such journalists is unsparing -- neither we nor they are spared; their understanding is hard-won -- won from the facts and not confined to them and clarified by rigorous and sometimes painful and discouraging reflection.

This unsparing attention to some important albeit ordinary aspect of life is found only in a fraction of the enormous output of American journalism, but here is the core, our claim to virtue.

By listening to the necessary voices one begins to understand the importance of a journalism restricted neither by tradition nor by habit, nor by fashion, technology or pompous professionalism. One is reminded that the moral reach and civilizing influence of journalism have been established by the often unorthodox accomplishments of exceptional men and women. When the reporter Bill Bolitho died in 1930 at the age of 39, his friend Heywood Broun wrote a tribute in which he set Bolitho's achievement against the stifling orthodoxy of a supposedly dwindling (here his judgement was premature) band of journalistic "graybeards." Broun wrote:

> "From the standpoint of the old-fashioned school Bolitho could hardly be called a newspaperman at all, let alone a leader in the first rank. There still endure graybeards who detest frills and shake their heads to say that news is all and that anything else which creeps into a paper is so much folly. But these graybeards employ a tight and tenuous definition of news. They mean no more than the report of the thing which has happened. They feel that it is the part of newspapermen to behave like members of the Light Brigade and refuse to reason why. Such a definition would have excluded William Bolitho almost completely. He was far more interested in the explanation than in the event. Many had better eyes to see and ears to hear but less of analytic power . . . . Yet news must be a deeper and more significant thing than a mere recital of names, addresses and the doctor's diagnosis. Causes, however far beneath the surface they may lie, are distinctly within the province of journalism. That is, if journalism is to be a kingdom and not a little parish."[1]

In view of the occasionally substantiated fear that the post-Watergate press would revel in arrogant self-absorption, it may be argued that the press ought to be a parish -- the commonwealth's truth-producing and truth-protecting parish. But what Broun found in Bolitho and what others find in Broun are qualities of inquiry, observation and understanding which in the end will transcend all of our efforts to purify journalism. We ought to ask ourselves where these qualities come from and how they are employed, or how hobbled. Do we find them in William Cobbett's bristling independence ("professions of impartiality I shall make none")? In John Reed's brave dash with the vanguard of Pancho Villa's cavalry? In the career of Carey McWilliams, who interrupted his own important reporting and writing to edit The Nation? In Lillian Ross's scrutiny of the blusteringly elusive John Huston for her report called Picture? In Ernie Pyle's sympathy, of which Randall Jarrell said:

> "His writing, like his life, is a victory of the deepest moral feeling, of sympathy and understanding and affection, over circumstances as terrible as any men have created or endured."[2]

Virtuous journalism is a weedy growth. It is nourished by great events (Pyle's reporting, Reed's Ten Days That Shook the World, Hannah Arendt's New Yorker report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann) and by everyday life anywhere (Smith's Life photo essays, "Spanish Village" and "Country Doctor"). It survives the routine discouragements (the hazing of young reporters, the worried grumblings of the graybeards, the cultivated blandness of the networks and the great newspapers), the eccentricities of editors (Harold Ross's queerly accurate view of the weaknesses of writers is a good example), even adulation -- the cases of Hunter Thompson and Gay Talese. It tends to be weedily unsystematic: Virtuous journalists are much more likely to hang around, in the manner of, say, John Gregory Dunne, than to practice any form of "precision journalism." A journalism which aims at precise understanding sometimes needs to be imprecise and tentative in its approach -- especially at the outset. The voices of these journalists often will be profoundly human: They choose their subjects carefully (consider John McPhee and Edward Hoagland) and the practice of attention leaves them knowledgeable and increases their immunity to deception and illusion.

It is no small accomplishment to be authentically weedy. Weedy reporting is a sort of journalistic counterpart to the "termite art" that Manny Farber found in in B movies -- "where the spotlight of culture is nowhere in evidence, so that the craftsman can be ornery, wasteful, stubbornly self-involved, doing go-for-broke art and not caring what comes of it."[3] We may yearn for exact professional identity; we may resent, as Henry Fairlie does, the absence in our newspapers of "a vision of life that is steady and whole: a consistency of values and attitude, and even of ideology . . . ,"[4] but we should understand that in important ways journalism benefits from its amorphousness.

Journalism is not art, it is not science; neither is journalism scholarship, although the accomplishments of journalists, purposeful and accessible, often outdo the investigations of scholars: Lillian Ross's long report on the making of Huston's Red Badge of Courage remains the best writing about Hollywood; John Gregory Dunne's The Studio runs a close second. Journalists enjoy the advantage of not having to be artists or scholars. They are free to be amateurs, to be interested, to practice, as Dunne has said, "the art of the scavenger." They approach, move near and identify the objects of public attention (politicians, revolutionaries, space stations, celebrities, murderers, paintings, scientific discoveries); they help us to remember, or remember for us, what we need to know to understand the workings of the world; they educate, first themselves and one another (the newsroom always has been a school -- one of the

very best), then the rest of us.

As an occupation, journalism is an enormous vibrating hodge-podge. Recruiting and apprenticeship are unsystematic, the early burn-out rate is high, mobility is constant and it may be compulsive, as with those aspiring anchorpeople whose new audition tapes to national consulting firms are in the mail almost the moment they change jobs. The purpose of journalism is to harp, nag, offend, appease, investigate, obscure, admire, fawn, entertain, clarify, scandalize, compliment, revile, sneer, giggle, announce, pronounce, warn, reassure, rake the gutter and set forth ideas with righteous highmindedness. This fundamental, enduring and indispensable confusion ought to rebound and knock sprawling silly questions -- like the question of identity, or of virtuous identity. But there are ways in which that question deserves and needs to be explored, if only because the discovery of one's individual identity as journalist often is hindered by the habits and anxieties of the employing agencies.

Few newsrooms are organized to release the best energies of reporters and editors. Most operate at relatively low levels of controlled proficiency, and all too often the excess energy overflows as boredom, frustration, resentment, restlessness and the sort of early resignation which makes the Brouns, Rosses and Pyles far more exceptional than they might be. American journalism provides great opportunities for the technically proficient, and for those who willingly accept the limitations on inquiry and understanding implied by the code of brevity, clarity and directness of expression which most journalists are expected to follow. It rewards the skillful, but, as Broun said of Bolitho, it may refuse even to grant recognition to the imaginative reporter. One of the great internal dangers to a democratic civilization is the citizen whose imagination, as Northrop Frye said, has been "starved and fed on shadows." A greater danger is a press which spreads crumbs and tidbits, which sharpens, by simplifying, the deceptive appearance of things and fails to nourish the penetrating or creative imagination. A democratic journalism must find ways, increasingly, to feed the imagination of readers and viewers, to prompt them to understand change and to perceive what is enduring, and to acquaint them with those many others -- the truly valuable members of society, so often overlooked in the press -- who can enlarge their understanding. These are not technical questions. They are questions of policy and they are pivotal.

The traditional journalistic outlook, learned perforce by all young reporters and editors, is an accumulation of practical wisdom, calculation and stifling prejudice. It has its uses: Safe footing is necessary, so is a certain amount of institutional security, so is protection of useful routine. But we should ask ourselves whether this tradition is transmitted proudly and expansively, or somewhat grudgingly, as a fretwork of warnings.

A vital tradition readily assimilates experiments and unorthodox ideas; a stiffening tradition stiffly assimilates only what is readily assimilable, strained and diluted. The cherished words remain -- fairness, independence -- but the meanings change. Our journalistic tradition includes the work of Broun and Bolitho, Jacob Riis, Ida Tarbell and Joan Didion, but the enclosing outlook represents the values of a powerful and wealthy industry, the public communications industry. Within this enclosure the integrity of journalistic enterprise is, generally, respected. We can be grateful that there is not more corporate meddling. But caution and calculation are atmospheric factors in most if not all large journalistic organizations, and corporate expectations touch lightly but significantly the decisions of editors, news directors and reporters. The editor of any newspaper owned by a chain or group will say with absolute assurance that overt corporate restraint rarely if ever reaches the newsroom -- but, then that editor's intuitive understanding of what is permissible is so keen that overt restraint will never be required. The big words that are pronounced with a confidence which implies that their opposites are unnecessary are the stiffeners of tradition.

Fairness. Fairness is an admirable quality, especially when some moral or intellectual effort, or some risk, is required to achieve it. The Kentucky abolitionist writer and editor Cassius Clay, a disciple of William Lloyd Garrison, capable of devastating invective, was a fairminded journalist. In his newspaper, the True American, published in Lexington between 1844 and 1847, he published his views forthrightly, risking his life to do so. He also, in a column called "proslavery," published the arguments of slavers. Because he was convinced of the rightness of his judgement on the slavery question, he assumed that his view would prevail in the open debate on slavery which he encouraged. But he never would have accepted the assumption, the sort of habitual, unconsidered journalistic assumption so aptly defined by Harold Lasswell in the 1930s -- " . . . that some automatic process distilled

intelligence from rival kinds of thoughtlessness."[5]

Lasswell argued that journalists rigorously exercising all the critical intelligence they could summon should sift out "opinions based on error" because in perilous times the accumulation of error "endangered the survival of democracy itself." We flinch before this kind of analysis. We know how dangerous it is to begin discarding ideas or opinions which we consider to be wrong. We believe in fairness. We prefer jeopardy to censorship. But the superficial balancing of unexamined opinions also is dangerous. We need time to learn the truth, and better ways to find it. When we have a knowing journalism, the fulcrum does not so much shift as sink, and the artificial balancing of skimmed facts is replaced by a deeper fairness whose center is a unremitting concern for the publication of the truth.

Independence. Ever since the political parties lost control of newspapers of general circulation it has been assumed that a publication which is not independent must be in the pocket of some officeholder or special interest. Sometimes. But independence must be used creatively if it is to have any value at all. The independence from government regulation or interference which publishers feared might be encroached upon during the early years of Franklin Roosevelt's administration also was a way of protecting journalistic insularity and shortsightedness. The period's eloquent press critics referred to this balking independence as "negative freedom." One of these critics, Herbert Agar, then editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, said this of the independent press:

> "I am suggesting . . . . that while the American press is still physically free, it is morally unfree. It is timid. It is time-serving. It is lacking in imagination. It is unwilling to tell a story that its public would prefer not to hear. And for these reasons it may be about to lose its physical freedom. John Milton told us that those who are moral slaves and cowards can never remain physically free. They may inherit such freedom, but they cannot maintain it. In the last twenty years the press has lost its outward freedom over most of the earth's surface. It will lose that freedom in America also unless it begins to earn the precious privilege. The only way to earn freedom is to behave like a free man, clear-purposed and unafraid."[6]

As a principle, stubborn independence protects the press from political corruption and complicity. As unexamined stance, stubborn independence may protect the press from those who would remind it of its larger obligations and of its opportunities for greater and more useful service.

Skepticism. Journalists are professional disbelievers, and anyone who has observed their conversion (recall the embarrassingly unrestrained, zealous, adoring journalistic following Pope John Paul II attracted when he visited New York City) will be grateful that skepticism prevails. But skepticism is reflexive edginess; it fends and fences; every object is held at arm's length. The question is whether organizations dominated by the skeptical outlook can ever discover anything. Skepticism, an alertness to factual discord, is a necessary part of the working journalist's understanding of the world, but it will not embrace the life of a city or a farming town, it will not reveal the workings of a corporation or a terrorist cell, it will not explain to readers the value of a poem or painting or a discovery in cellular biology or plant genetics. Skepticism is indispensable to the "investigative" or muckraking reporter, but the corrupt adversary also is skeptical, and skillful at outguessing the reporter who operates at the same level.

A skeptical press understands abuses of power more readily than it understands the nature of power, but to penetrate the everyday workings of organizations in which power is created, distributed and used for our benefit or our exploitation -- this requires the employment of imagination and of an intellectual energy different in quality from the investigator's alert watchfulness. Agar said the press was "lacking in imagination." This statement is true. Nothing is truer of the American press than that it lacks imagination. It is at times clever and adaptible, and alert, but not imaginative. Yet imagination -- the grasp of things in their wholeness, the constant search for connections -- produces the kind of comprehension of society, the larger disclosures, which we so badly need. It is not enough for a reporter or editor not to be gullible, just as it is not enough for a democracy to be free from corruption. A journalist needs that imaginative extension of interest, and an environment predominantly skeptical and distrustful may discourage its development.

Vigilance. Nobody is surprised when the police officer, whose profession is watchfulness, becomes cynical, but we expect that the journalist, whose profession is watchfulness, will retain some idealism and the capacity not only to inform but to amuse and divert. It is part of our folklore that the journalist serves as the eyes, ears and nose of a public, or multitude of publics, which cannot learn directly and could not learn much at all without the press. But if vigilance is not to degenerate into pathological investigativeness, or keyhole-watching, it must include other elements.

The journalist's vigilance must have a foundation of hope and an awareness of the possibilities available to humanity; it should be a source

vision. We have examples. George Leonard, who wrote about education for Look and later moved into the Esalen/Tamalpais wing of the human potential movement, has been writing for years as a visionary journalist, about play, health and the reforming of our ideas about the ways life can be lived. He is vigilantly watchful for the appearance of organizations whose purposes he can explore, for living examples of the ideas he expounds. This is another vigilance and another investigativeness as useful educationally as the muckraking which uncovers and consequences of greed and fear.

Detachment. Robert Capa told young war photographers that if they found their photos unsatisfactory, it was probably because they were too far from the action. A reporter cannot be detached from something with which he has not been involved. Journalists must move close, and closer. The only detachment which has the least value is the detachment with comes through the effort, moral, intellectual, physical, of extricating oneself from a story closely observed and deeply understood. With this rebalancing the revealing viewpoint may be discovered. Premature distancing is a violation of the journalist's responsibility, yet the imperatives of routine news gathering dictate that reporters should move no closer than they must to scrape away a few pertinent facts — a sort of scaling operation.

These are journalistic reflexes. They impose on the "universe of discourse" limitations as severe as those resulting from censorship. Journalistic virtue implies a clearsightedexpansion of outlook and requires determined attempts to cross boundaries separating journalist from society, journalist from subject, journalist from journalist, journalist from ideas, journalists from sentiments and feelings, journalist from the "inner abundance" that one of Broun's friends found in his work.

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It probably is impossible and may be entirely undesirable to try to shape mass circulation publications and broadcast networks into organs representing some consistent outlook. We are too good-natured a people, and too sensitive to the dangers of ideological excess, to insist that our newspapers take on exact and confining identities. We value the amorphous and the irrelevant. But it may be possible to detect some desirable consistency in the connections between exceptional journalists and their audiences, in the ways that their personal values and moral outlooks govern their professional performance, and in their ways of moving through the worlds which they observe.

The seven points which follow represent a sort of delineation of journalistic character when it is undeluded, undeceived, dissatisfied with the superficial (superficiality is untruth, W. Eugene Smith said), and faithful to the audience. Reporters, documentary filmakers, editors, broadcasters or photographers who operate in this way must be as free as possible to venture confidently into the world (confident that they are supported in their desire to turn the facts inside-out); they must be able to collaborate freely with anyone who will carry them nearer the available truth; they must be versatile; at times they must be adventurers, at times imposters; they must be sensitive to the workings of their own identities; they must recognize all the many techniques of falsification and distortion. Here, briefly, are some of the requirements for the development of an imaginative and effective journalistic outlook:

1. An integrity fortified by authentic respect for the audience. In the issue of Camera dedicated to W. Eugene Smith and his famous photographs of the horrid injuries caused by mercury pollution in the Japanese fishing village of Minamata, the magazine's editor, Jim Hughes, said of Smith:

> "His primary objective is to provide as much valuable information and journalistic interpretation as possible about subject matter he considers important."[7]

Smith, who was beaten, as it turned out, fatally, by goons as he photographed the devastation caused by the Chisso Corporation, was quoted as saying this:

> "My only editor would be my conscience and my conscience would be of my responsibilities -- in constant disciplined rejudgement of my failures and of my fulfillments . . . . I would persuade the reader to listen with his eyes and his mind in the hope that from self-persuasion he will be moved to action or at least to the point he feels he should be moved to action. In other words, I want the photographs and the words to work ideas into the conscience of the reader -- or into the consciousness with sufficient strength to hold him for a moment or two in serious thought . . . I do not know how this report will affect your readers. We (the project was completed with the collaboration of Smith's wife, Aileen) have given it the best that we can. My hope is that it will prove a document of love, hatred and warning."[8]

Hughes sees the prosaic obligation, and among the greatest achievements of American journalism is the high quality of its prosaically dutiful output, but constantly molding and refining those photographs was that essential integrity ("constant disciplined rejudgement") and the hope that those who saw the photographs would respond. There are the codes of ethics, there is professional responsibility, there is integrity, and they are not always identical or even, as Ralph Pulitzer learned when he tried to get Broun to shut up about Sacco and Vanzetti, compatible. Smith's integrity was severely

demanding. Professional responsibility and adequate ethical behavior are possible where there is no regard for the reader. In many professional news operations one finds a disdainful or patronizing attitude toward the audience, which has the mentality of an eight year old, or a ten year old, or a twelve year old. Integrity requires the existence of a personal obligation to the reader -- and not to the reader's (or viewer's) "needs" or interests, but to the reader's responsibilities. The journalist working with integrity assumes that the reader is fully capable and willing to assume responsibilities. We are offered a view of ourselves as capable citizens and not as "consumers" of the "product" called news. Integrity exalts.

2. A true sense of identity as journalist. A journalist informs the public, protects the First Amendment, has, perhaps, some specialty: medical reporter, art critic, metro editor, news director -- just as lawyers and physicians are tax attorneys, trial lawyers, orthopedic surgeons or pediatricians. But bones and writs are not the substance of journalistic work. The work of journalists is complicated, not only technically, but morally and socially, and intellectually, when it is done properly. The identity, outlook and responsibility of the journalist needs continual clarification (" . . . in constant disciplined rejudgement of my failures and of my fulfillments . . . "). Unclarified, it is not so much an identity as a nest of remnants, fictions, habits, ghosts, anxieties. Irving Cobb, the newspaper humorist of the 1920s, said of the reporter:

> "Essentially, he is an actor. He can mingle with millionaires and talk about billion-dollar deals when he doesn't have the rent money in his pocket. He can sleep in a stuffy hall bedroom and write knowingly about the revels of the rich. He's living the life of the people he writes about, and his own life is altogether out of the picture. That seems to me to be the lure of the game."[9]

Here is Seymour Krim's caricature of the actor in his sordid habitat -- before the "revolution in reportorial values" which stirred American journalism in the 1960s:

> "Traditionally, the average cityside newspaperman was a machine, a phone-bully, a sidewalk-buttonholer, a privacy-invader, a freebie-collector and not a writer at all -- he had a formula for processing his information . . . . Newspaper offices were known in the trade as being comfortable, in-the-know flophouses where losers came to trickle out their lives . . . . The idea that they might be frontrunner snaring and interpreting reality as it broke before their eyes would have been a joke to the majority of these putdown experts who envied the stars on the world stage that they covered, but never conceived that they themselves were in the position to make history and not merely record it."[10]

The bleariness and bluster are quite largely gone from the cityroom, and broadcast news studios probably never looked that way at all. Fewer impostors and phonies adorn the newsroom; it is not even a very good refuge for those, either unprepared or worn out, who, as Henry Adams said, sought only a quiet table in a newspaper office to fritter away obscurity.

But each generation delivers new warpings. Among those presently with us: the foreign correspondent who knows as much about Kenya as he can learn in Rome (plane connections from Rome to Tunis or Lagos apparently are quicker than those from Lagos to Nairobi or Capetown; hence, an office in an international city is more convenient, however remote); the editor expertly preoccupied with computer capacity; the television reporters who must dance for consultants or lose their jobs; the bored lifestyle writer whose despair is a vision of eternal cuteness . . . . Journalism is not a hideout for the indolent or the disillusioned. It can be, even for those who choose not to be history-makers or "frontrunners snaring and interpreting reality," very stimulating and rewarding. But all too often, especially for younger journalists, it turns out to be an occupation where indolence and disillusionment are encountered.

Why? Because like the computer room, the newsroom requires a reliably steady flow of energy, tolerating very little deviation. Because of the desire for ever-larger profits. Because mindless competition and faddism distort values. Because the audience is wrongly interpreted as a market. Because serious editorial planning, including ideas from the staff, is almost never undertaken. For all these reasons, younger and older journalists are unable to see even intermediate destinations in their careers. This means that the journalist who hopes for accomplishment must either be cleverly submissive, carefully selecting the moments when deviation from routine will be permitted and will pay off, or he or she must be willing to take risks. Risks are not bankrolled: W. Eugene Smith and Aileen Smith sometimes had only a few dollars to live on while they were making the Minamata photographs. If they pay off, they bring satisfaction, income and reputation. But for journalists to take chances, they must have a sort of bedrock of identity which will sustain them. They must be idealistic and in some way, determined.

The defining of identity ought to come early, and it ought to be one of the obligations of schools of journalism to help students adopt outlooks which are neither careerist or technocratic (both brittle identities), but which contribute to their appreciation for the encrusted evolution of the journalistic identity, and enhance active discussion of strategies through which journalists may sustain important work in the discouragingly comfortable and secure setting of the modern newsroom.

3. An acute sensitivity to the presence of figments.

Gritting and gnashing, Time Magazine announced in its issue of January 7, 1952, that Iranian Premier Mossadeqh would be its villainous "Man of the Year." This grudging recognition erected for the consideration of Time readers a figment whose role would not be played for nearly thirty years, its vestiges being those black-robed mullahs who defied and infuriated the West during the hostage crisis. Of Mossadeqh, Time said:

> "In his plaintive, singsong voice he gabbled a defiant challenge that sprang out of a hatred and envy almost incomprehensible to the West."[11]

This perplexed "West" lacked the "moral muscle" to accept the "fundamental moral challenge posed by this strange old wizard who lives in a mountainous land and who is, sad to relate, the man of 1951." By comparison with mysteriously backward Iran, Time said, Turkey "had passed through a drastic process of modernization which in most of the Moslem World is still to come." The magazine favorably quoted Lebanese Prime Minister Malik who had observed that the "deep problem of the near East must await the spiritual recovery of the west."

What the perverse old gnome had done, of course, was to nationalize western oil interests and then to dodge accomodation with the spiritually deflated but diplomatically aggressive "west" -- meaning the government of the United States. All of this shrewdness was given a journalistic overlay and swathed with exoticism: The benighted East awaits our crusade. The sentiment is understandable. One of the clearer expressions of our ethnocentrism is the belief that the world requires our crusade, which once and for all will rid the planet of superstition, darkness, primordial terror, and premiers who will not deal with us. Good thing for these inhabitants of our mythical East that we also attribute to them a superhuman or subhuman patience -- it's been a long wait.

The existence of any real Iran was eclipsed by a combination of ideological distortions furthered through the press: Iran bound in the darkness of disgusting tradition; Iran ruled by a troll; Iran, the test of American determination to resist Soviet expansion to the Persian Gulf. The Alsop Brothers and hundreds of other reporters went out to Iran and brought back the same story until, magically, it was enacted for us on television in the capture and confinement of American citizens by priests and revolutionaries.

Anyone in the mood for random postulations might consider how reality reaches us, through successive screenings: Reporters clothed in identities which make them recognizable to other journalists study framed scenes and report their findings to others even more remote than they are,

who then relay some version of the report to us. To be sure, these stereotypes crystallize order from chaos -- but what is chaos? Thirty million people living in a way most of us do not understand -- that's chaos. A few American observers living in the cities and relaying packages of words about situations they are no better prepared than we to understand -- that's order. Chaos may be preferable. It seems ironic that Cynthia Dwyer, the reporter who went to Iran to correct the impressions of the Iranian revolution created by the press, should have been arrested and held as a spy in an Iranian jail.

Any reporter who sets out to peel away gooey stereotypes and study what lies underneath needs to understand how figments are invented and to show a superior understanding not just for factual reconstruction, but for the actual, discernible history of events. In Mossadeqh's case, the reporter needs to know, simply, that he was not a western politician and that his nation was not a western -- nor, as it turned out, a westernizing -- nation. This is a big order. It requires hard study, travel, experience, a shrewd historical grasp of the situation, and a strong sentiment, a feeling of obligation not only to readers but to the unheard sources whose daily lives are filtered through this apparatus. It requires a sense of mission. The scope may be local, regional or national or international -- the purposes for this attentive reporting will be the same. W. Eugene Smith, again:

> What has been your most consistent personal philosophical concern?
>
> "Humanity. I try to take what voice I have and give it to those who don't have one at all."[12]

It is easy enough to list the qualities that reporters need to work in these complicated situations; it is much harder to attract people to journalism who will carry these qualities through years of routine assignments and apply them when the dramatic situation arises. Inquisitiveness and insistence are not enough; the skillful scraping of the surface is not enough. Historical understanding is important, but there rarely is time for events to be seen wholly, in context. Yet, if time had been found -- or if Time had found time to do something more than quarrel with Mossadeqh . . . . if the Alsop Brothers and the others had not for three decades accepted so readily the bastion-against-communism argument (bastions are simple, purposeful places) . . . if forecasts had been sought, other voices heard . . . . if the strategy which included Iran the bastion had been closely examined . . . . if the moral question had been raised about the internal terrorism of the Shah's regime . . . . if the press had criticized itself more broadly (A.J. Liebling's witty jabs were exceptional) for its acceptance of the bastion argument, as it now has an opportunity to analyze the new bastion arguments of the Reagan government -- would it have made a difference?

Probably not. Neither sporadic investigations nor journalistic outbursts nor occasional remonstrations will change the direction of consistent policy. But if, tomorrow, Newsweek, the Los Angeles Times, Penthouse, Woman's Day, ABC News, Knight-Ridder Newspapers, Pacific News Service, the Boston Globe and CNN, announced that through cooperative agreement they had decided to support a two year investigation of United States defense policy or of the future of Latin America within the context of American intentions, and to broadcast and print the findings everywhere, would this sort of effort, diverting, say, no more than one per cent of overall editorial budget, make a difference? Would we have less waywardness in our national reporting if journalistic organizations, working with research centers and using government research reports, formed national computer banks containing readily available information on critical questions -- water supplies, urban and rural crime, industrial productivity, pollution . . . . ?

Not long ago a reporter named Fred Garretson died at the age of 47. He worked for the Oakland Tribune, and unless you happened to be a reader of the Tribune you probably would never have been able to take advantage of the scientific, environmental and technical information collected and reported by this dynamo (Fred almost singlehandedly saved San Francisco Bay from filling-in by developers, and that was only one of his accomplishments). Why is there no national science news service which collects and sifts information from the nation's twenty or thirty best science writers and makes it available to all of us? The question carries us away from Iran, but fragments and figments comprise much of our information on any topic, and there are no good reasons why imagination and information processing should not be combined to give us better and probably cheaper reports in almost any area of national or international interest.

4, Collaboration.

By insisting on its independence the American press tends to isolate itself from nourishing impulses, restrict its vision and distort its history. A small example of cultural isolation: In his essay on the history of the "new journalism" of the 1960s and 1970s, Tom Wolfe suggests that the movement started through spontaneous combustion of a half dozen newspaper feature writers (Jimmy Breslin, Dick Schaap, Robert Fortis, Michael Mok, Robert Lipsyte, Gay Talese, Wolfe).[13] This interpretation ignores the continuity of American reporting, which periodically is revived by a "new journalism" which explores common life (Jacob Riis prowling Mulberry Bend with camera and notebook, his influence on Lincoln Steffens, Ray Stannard Baker and Ida Tarbell); it

also ignores the influential work of reporters of the same or immediately preceding generations who did not work for newspapers -- John Hersey (Hiroshima), Lillian Ross (Picture); and it ignores the less tangible contribution to the vision of the new journalism made by a writer like William Burroughs, whose immersion in social decay has offshoots in Hunter Thompson's Las Vegas and Michael Herr's Vietnam.

Deliberate cultural isolation is annoying, but other failures to reach out imaginatively and finds means of collaboration may be dangerous. The Louisville Courier-Journal is a newspaper capable of outstanding accomplishment. Its reporting on toxic waste disposal and pollution from chemical wastes has been thorough and energetic. But these reports followed damage to the city's sewage disposal plant and further pollution of the Ohio River through the illegal disposal of wastes, and recently the newspaper has been handed even more grist: Explosions, apparently caused by industrial wastes leaked into sewers, which blew up miles of city streets.

Here is the question which must be asked: What conceivable quality of foresight could have allowed the Courier-Journal to alert its readers ten years ago to the growing danger from careless and illegal disposal of toxic wastes? Could the Courier-Journal now enter into a collaborative agreement with a board of scientific advisers, allowing the newspaper to forecast the dangers of 1991 or 2021? These predictions would not be accurate, but mistaken predictions which direct attention to potential problems are better than none.

Yet, major publications do not enter into long-term arrangements with outsiders; they do not use universities as sources of information in any regular way; they enter as organizations into few ad hoc arrangements with public interest groups, community organizations or committees of experts. A virtuous editor could double the size and effectiveness of his or her staff by making deals with people who are not normally on the payroll.

5. Sympathy, attention, imagination. The kind of imagination journalists need is not Pascal's "delusive faculty," the deceiving vision; it is Wallace Stevens' "clue to reality." Ernie Pyle was a man of unbounded sympathy, and the moral expression of that sympathy was his close attention to the terrible situations he observed. That attention was, essentially, imaginative; he had to imaginatively define the terror and longing of men involved in an industrialized form of warfare. We should investigate and not shy away from the journalistic imagination. Smith said of his wartime experiences:

> "The secret of my photography is that I have a great ability to understand how things are going to be before I experience them

> . . . . This does not mean, however, that I did not look at the world with openness and curiosity. But I suffered no real traumas from any experience, because few of them were beyond the realm of my imagination."[14]

The journalistic imagination shapes and defines. If it gives us stereotypes, these stereotypes at least are more likely to be endowed with compassion and deep human understanding. Hersey imaginatively reconstructed the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima, and his images of the flayed and blinded citizens of that city provide us with the most important single piece of journalism of our time. Thousands of reporters saw World War II as closely as Pyle, Hersey and Smith; others risked death (Pyle was killed, Smith badly wounded and Hersey nearly died in a plane crash at sea); but these reporters were able to make the arching connections, say what it meant to be a grocery boy one day and a soldier wearily carrying a machine gun tripod the next.

Others have given us "profiles" -- biographical essays rich with the resonance we need to understand the interplay of individual and organization. Here is a passage from Lillian Ross's description of John Huston from her New Yorker report, published as Picture:

> "Huston sat down on the arm of a chair, fixed a long brown cigarette in one corner of his mouth, took a kitchen match from his trouser pocket, and scraped the head of the match into flame with his thumbnail. He lit the cigarette and drew deeply on it, half closing his eyes against the smoke, which seemed to make them slant still more. Then he rested his elbows on his knees, holding the cigarette to his mouth with two fingers of one hand, and looked out the window. The sun had gone down, and the light coming into the suite, high in the Tower, was beginning to dull. Huston looked as though he might be waiting -- having set up a Huston scene -- for the cameras to roll. But, as I gradually grew to realize, life was not imitating art, Huston was not imitating himself, when he set up such a scene; on the contrary, the style of the Huston pictures, Huston being one of the few Hollywood directors who manage to leave their personal mark on the films they make, was the style of the man. In appearance, in gestures, in manner of speech, in the selection of the people and objects he surrounded himself with, and in the way he composed them into individual 'shots" (the abrupt closeup of the thumbnail scraping the head of a kitchen match) and then arranged his shots in a dramatic sequence, he was simply the raw material of his own art; that is, the man whose personality left its imprint, unmistakably, on what had come to be known as a Huston picture."[15]

Ross has sliced through, imaginatively, to the core of Huston's technique and his character. She has him under scrutiny, fully emerged from his colorful background. She has his colleagues and the studio setting in which he operates. The possession of the subject, arrived at through research, conversation, observation, hanging around, sympathetic understanding, is the very opposite of fact-scraping.

6. Wandering, adventure, surprise.

Many journalists started their careers as wanderers (Theodore White, Drew Pearson) or adventurers (John Reed, Nellie Bly's "stunt reporting," Lowell Thomas), and some have turned wandering into a successful form -- Calvin Trillin's "U.S. Journal" in the New Yorker, E.B. White's gently inquisitive poking around New York for the same magazine forty years ago. The willingness to wander, to wait for something to happen, to embark on adventures whose outcomes are entirely unforeseeable, and then to offer surprising reports to readers, represent a spirit invaluable to American journalism -- and one, of course, which few editors will subsidize. It must somehow be protected and nourished -- as Charles Kuralt has nourished it -- because the opposing viewpoint, holding that news is what is returned from assigned stories, and that the sum of these stories represents available reality, is an affliction. Dan Rather sneaking across the border and coming back with the standard line of the Afghan rebels -- this is one kind of reporting, and its characteristic is complete predictability; Dan Rather wandering through Afghanistan for three months would produce another story entirely, for an astute reporter free to exercise his abilities would broadcast a report which would be surprising, new, news, if only because he would have learned more than he expected. There are different kinds of expectations, and it may be that Rather's, which rapidly reduces reality to broadcast segments, is not much different from Smith's, an anticipatory, rapid, image-making expectation. One distinguishing factor, however, would be the time of involvement. Smith spent ten weeks photographing "The Spanish Village;" Rather had, as I recall, a few days in Afghanistan. Expectations forced by tight deadlines are tight frames, ruling experience; expectations which flow more freely, change.

7. Pluralism.

> "Men have been expected to tell the truth about facts, not about feelings. They have not been expected to talk about feelings at all.
>
> "Yet even about facts they have continually lied."[16]

These are the words of Adrienne Rich, a writer who most of the readers of this essay would identify as a feminist writer. Whether that identity was applied with fatigue, dislike, puzzlement, acceptance or admiration, it would be applied, and if Adrienne Rich appeared as a commentator on NBC News she would be expected to perform as a member of that minority. And the network would reserve the right to disagree with her viewpoint -- although it would never reserve the right to agree with it. The network, dominated by white men, would remain neutral; Adrienne Rich, who had been admitted for the purpose of presenting but not advancing a

"viewpoint," would be forejudged the antagonist. If she accused male politicians of lying endlessly and confidently, her "charge" would be dismissed on grounds of unfactuality. She would not appear again. Meg Greenfield and Ellen Goodman express their views in the press, and they are not men in disguise, but in much of their writing -- Greenfield more than Goodman -- the writer's sex is not relevant. The American press is good at neutrality, but where the special viewpoint is relevant, it tends to offer slighting glimpses of the forbidden territory.

Presumably, white male supremacy has been diluted, and the demand for, particularly, Black reporters and editors is so great that smaller or less prestigious newspapers and broadcasting operations complain that they cannot hold onto Black employes. These efforts are sincere. At least one newspaper chain offers bonuses to member newspapers which employ members of "minorities." Complaints from Black staffmembers about deliberate or unintended racism are heard and lead to changes in news policy. Yet, many of these minority journalists still, perhaps as much as twenty years after the racist patterns began to change in journalism, feel uncomfortable with their situations. And one reason for their discomfort is that they are expected to represent and defend, inside and outside the newsroom, the Black or Chicano or Women's viewpoint against others, including colleagues, whose atti is skeptical, patronizing, suspicious or hostile.

If journalists who belong to the recognized minorities are placed in awkward circumstances, it may be because the organizations which employ them have neglected to make the basic changes which would give them a pluralistic mission. And they fail to adopt a pluralistic mission because they lack, explicitly, any mission, pluralistic or unpluralistic, assimilatory or exclusionist. If you try to get beyond the usual platitudes -- protecting freedoms, advancing commerce . . . -- you find that the easiest way to measure the identity of a newspaper or magazine is according to shifts in specific weight: a newspaper is more or less investigative, more or less gossipy, more or less concerned with hard news, more or less interested in ethical safeguards. Over time, journalism was more with Joseph Pulitzer, less with Ralph Pulitzer, more with Edward R. Murrow or Howard K. Smith, something less with John Chancellor or Walter Cronkite. What is it essentially? What essentially are the purposes of this or that newspaper or broadcasting station? These are the questions which neither are asked nor answered. So editors change "staffing patterns" and hope, as they unload the burden of purpose on new employes, that something beneficial and untroubling will happen.

4

What is important in the end is that Edward Abbey go to Moab, Relmin Morin go to Algeria, Margaret Bourke-White go to Russia, David Douglas Duncan and Homer Bigart go to Korea, Gay Talese go to Sodom, Lillian Ross find Hemingway . . . . and that they freely practice their trades, and, in a subsidiary way, that those who educate journalists use their acts of discovery to suggest what journalism is and can be.

But journalism is something more than the practice of journalism, otherwise we should -- and probably more honestly would have to -- measure our profession against the procession of detectives without badges, seedy imposters, pursuers of the crooked county assessor, fawning fashion columnists and authors of nagging editorial sermonettes, all far more numerous and, collectively, influential, than the exceptional figures mentioned in this essay.

Much if not most journalism is frivolous, and it can be seen in all its frivolousness, as a sort of fussing -- fussing about the weather, about some pitcher's losing streak, about the presence or absence of presidential statements on foreign policy, about creeping or uncreeping communism in Nicaraugua; or as impersonation, a subdued kind of clowning, a sterile theater in which the solemn faces (or silly faces) of the broadcast reporters and anchors conceal everything but the chosen facts, thus insulating viewers from all important truths; as an aviary, as organized impishness. Much of the news is laughably repetitive and useless.

And if journalism is regarded as frivolity, then its projection, the readership, the viewership, the audience, will also be frivolous: if journalism is primarily helpful, the audience will be seen as helpless; if it is primarily and most profitably investigative, the audience will be visualized in that way, as scroungers after the latest scandal; if journalism is to be diverting, then presumably the audience will need diversion above all else.

This is where integrity comes in. Integrity, whether we regard it as organizational or individual integrity, separates journalism from the projection of its most convenient and profitable purposes. Virtuous journalism, drawing strength from integrity, relies on idealism, but it is bedrock idealism. It is an idealism based on social necessity and true professional responsibility.

If anything in this essay is arguable, and everything is, it should be the assumption, threading through the piece, that the journalist ought to assume responsibilities not normally associated with journalism: witness, moral and intellectual arbiter, finder of truths. An even finer thread and more vulnerable assumption suggests that the transmitters of information (those messengers that the network anchors are always telling us lost their heads because they brought bad news) ought -- some of them -- to be agents of social redemption or social cohesion, if only as society's rememberers.

Yet, so many of our traditional authorities -- government, public education, the church -- have become factual presences, repositories of special information of limited value, that we may be justified in asking where the moral centers of the commonwealth reside. Is it possible or desirable that the great apparatus which links specialized center with specialized center, public with public, may link them more deeply intellectually and morally and emotionally as well as factually, and that it has undiscovered responsibilities in this regard which need at least to be considered?

Ask where the ideals of democratic society are protected, expanded and explained. Ask where the complexity of democratic life is explored. Ask where we find our vision of the democratic citizen -- not a person who has monopolized a computer chip, cornered some information, but a woman, man or child capable of sound and compassionate judgement, of tolerance and decisive action.

The press always has recognized some responsibilities for the creation and maintaining of a sound and just social order -- or for the disruption or reform of a too-sound and unjust order. The media generally have varied didactic functions: Television movies, typically having to do with addiction, child abuse, divorce, retardation -- "coping," overcoming confusion; the soap opera, which in silly and exaggerated ways nevertheless explores greed, deceit, duplicity, loneliness and love.

I am suggesting that clearer views of journalistic integrity and responsibility, extended imaginatively and collaboratively, may lead us toward a journalism which explains more and even (consider the possibilities of a lively documentary art) entertains more, which is less frivolous and wasteful and whose practicioners understand, explicitly, what they are up to. Journalists who stand out not only because of their skill and proficiency but for their feeling and their moral outlook (Bolitho, Broun, Ross, Marquis, W. Eugene Smith) ought to be at the core of the tradition we teach, and not exceptional or marginal figures.

NOTES

[1]Heywood Hale Broun (compiler), The Collected Edition of Heywood Broun, New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1941, pps. 237-239.

[2]"Ernie Pyle," Randall Jarrell, The Nation, May 19, 1945, p. 120.

[3]Manny Farber, Negative Space, New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1971, p. 136.

[4] "Harlot's Prerogative," Henry Fairlie, The New Republic, April 30, 1977, p. 23. ("Above all else what a great newspaper requires is a vision of life that is steady and whole: a consistency of values and attitude, and even of ideology (although the word brings its problems) which informs every page. The number and complexity and urgency of the decisions that must be taken on a newspaper each day are such that without such a consistency of vision, the reader will feel that he is merely being jerked from story to story each day, from opinion to opinion; and although he may be titillated, his dissatisfaction will be deep.")

[5]Harold LeClaire Ickes (editor), Freedom of the Press Today, New York, N.Y.: The Vanguard Press, 1951, p. 171.

[6]Freedom of the Press Today, p. 24.

[7]and[8] "The Journalist," Jim Hughes, Camera, April, 1974, p. 2.

[9]"Irving S. Cobb -- Still the Reporter," author not named, The American Press, June, 1929, p. 25.

[10]Seymour Krim, Shake It for the World, Smartass, New York, N.Y.: A Delta Book, Dell Publishing Company, 1971, pps. 353-354.

[11]"Man of the Year," Time Magazine, January 7, 1952, p. 16.

[12]Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper (editors), Dialogue with Photography, New York, N.Y.: Farrar/Straus/Giroux, 1979, p. 280.

[13]Tom Wolfe (editor), The New Journalism, New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1973, p.6.

[14]Dialogue with Photography, p. 260.

[15]Lillian Ross, Reporting, New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1965, pps. 225-226.

[16]Adrienne Rich, On Lies, Secrets and Silence, New York, N.Y., W.W. Norton & Company, 1979, p. 186.